



Meet The Team: Ms. Jayne Schaeffer

In 1980, in her second year of college at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota, Jayne Schaeffer left the flatlands of Minnesota to take a summer job at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado, a gateway community to Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). It was her first visit to a national park, and it would have a lasting effect on her career.

“I knew about national parks, because I had studied them in college,” Jayne says. “Our family didn’t travel a lot when I was growing up, so we hadn’t traveled to national parks. But I really loved being at Rocky Mountain National Park. We’d go off hiking almost every day. It was also interesting to learn that, when you live in Colorado, you don’t just go take a walk because it’s going to become exercise, one direction or the other.”

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Jayne Schaeffer is the Transportation Program Manager for the Intermountain Region of the National Park Service. Other than a brief hiatus to finish her graduate work in Landscape Architecture, she has worked with the NPS since 1982.



Intermountain Region (IMR), based in Denver, Colorado. Prior to moving to the IMR office in 1996, she was with the Denver Service Center for five years.

Jayne's first job with the National Park Service was in 1982, fresh out of college with a Bachelor's degree including work in Recreation and Park Management. Landing park jobs was difficult at the time, so Jayne reasoned that applying for the two least applied for seasonal jobs in the system might garner a position.

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"I applied to the Statue of Liberty in New York, and Big Bend National Park in Texas," she recalls. "The folks at Statue of Liberty called, and I ended up going to New York in 1983 as a seasonal park ranger. It was fun...22 years old in the Big City; quite a difference from rural Minnesota."

Jayne manages a large transportation budget for a NPS region that has 92 parks, including some of the large iconic parks in the system. "We have Glacier, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Grand Tetons, and also lots of smaller parks," she says. "It's a pretty good mix."

"Our transportation budget is between \$50 and \$56 million each year. That's made up of PRPP Category I and Category III funds, plus some Transit in the Parks (TRIP) Title 49 funds. We also use about \$3 million of cyclic funds each year that go into our pavement preservation program."

With that funding package, the Intermountain Region transportation program has been tackling some big projects. "We've been reconstructing the Going-To-The-Sun Road in Glacier, and we're on a continuous reconstruction effort of the road network at Yellowstone. Both of these projects are quite expensive."

Of all the transportation projects she's worked with, Jayne is happiest with the pavement preservation program she's instituted within the Intermountain Region. "It's not a sexy, exciting program," she says. "But we're helping the parks maintain their assets."

Jayne explains that, prior to the pavement preservation program, a park might use FLHP (Federal Lands Highway Program) funds to get a road rebuilt, and then hope that some 30 or 40 years later they could rebuild it again. “We took funds from cyclic and funds from FLHP, and we married them together,” says Jayne. “We zoned our whole region, so that we can go out and do all the paved assets that are in decent enough shape to warrant a preservation treatment. And we do it without the parks having to go through a competitive process to get funding. We’re making sure [preventative maintenance] gets done.”

“I think we talk a lot about asset management,” Jayne adds. “We spin our wheels and go around and around in circles sometimes. Our approach has really helped to break that loop open, to allow the small parks and the big parks to get their work done. It’s been a pretty good experience.”

Jayne had initially planned to be an art teacher and swimming coach when she was in high school. “Those plans ended when I went to a college that was not set up with a good art program. That’s when I went into recreation management.” Jayne later left the NPS for a short while to complete her graduate work in Landscape Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley.

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While she was finishing up her degree, she worked at Golden Gate National Recreation Area as a park ranger. This led to one of her favorite park-related memories.

“We did the big Fourth of July celebration for San Francisco, and had a couple hundred thousand people on Crissy Field,” Jayne recalled. “We set off this huge fireworks exhibit right by the Golden Gate Bridge. I was standing on the beach, and the Sixth Army Band was on one side, playing the 1812 Overture with the cannons blasting, and on my other side the guys were lighting off the fireworks. And I could overhear the guys who had packed the fireworks, and they were so excited as they saw each one go off. They’d say

‘Hey, Bob, did you do that one? Yeah, that was mine. Wow, that was beautiful!’ A very cool experience!”

Jayne credits some mentors who have had a big influence on her work. “Frank Mills was the first guy who hired me at the Statue of Liberty,” Jayne said. “He would say, ‘We’re here to protect the people from the resource, and we’re here to protect the resource from the people.’ At Golden Gate, Maria Burks, who is now the Commissioner of the National Parks of New York Harbor, was very instrumental in coaching me.”

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“And Roger Maxwell, who was my boss when I got the position here at Intermountain Region, was very important. He didn’t necessarily understand all of the engineering and design talk that would go on, but he would listen, and would understand when you needed something, and he’d get it for you. He was your biggest supporter, and for a supervisor, that’s pretty outstanding.”

Away from work, Jayne likes to throw pots on a pottery wheel. She’s also an avid road bicyclist, although not so keen on mountain bikes. “You know, everywhere you fall, there’s something, a yucca or a rock, or whatever.” She and her husband have also taken up sailing.

“We have a 19-foot sailboat that we have up on Lake Granby during the summer, and we’ve purchased a 1/7th share of a larger sailboat that resides in the British Virgin Islands. We’re looking toward retirement, and what we’re going to do, and we thought we’d practice our sailing and see how that goes.”

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